

ACTIVITIES THAT EXPOSE BARE SOIL TO EROSION

WHAT CAN YOU DO?



Many yard maintenance or small outdoor projects remove vegetation and expose bare soil to erosion. Preventing erosion is essential for protecting waterways and maintaining the quality and productivity of soil. Erosion usually occurs when rainfall washes away topsoil. Eroded topsoil can then be carried into rivers, streams and lakes causing cloudy, muddy water. The “mud” in muddy water is sediment, a mix of soil components and particles of sand, silt, and clay, that can cover the bottom of streams and lakes, smothering bottom dwelling plants and animals and covering valuable fish spawning areas. Sediment can block sunlight for aquatic plants, clog the gills of fish, reduce the amount of dissolved oxygen in the water, and contain nutrients that cause excessive plant and algae growth.

Controlling Erosion

When landscaping or remodeling, cover small mounds of dirt with a tarp or other cover so that wind and rain don't carry the sediments to nearby water bodies. When a project exposes bare soil, help prevent erosion by using the following methods:

MULCHING: A two to three-inch layer of mature compost placed directly on top of the soil, will control erosion by covering soil and promoting plant growth. Compost-enriched soil can also help control disease and pest infestation in plants, minimize runoff, reduce evaporation, insulate the soil, and suppress weed growth.

Mulches can also include straw, wood chips, shredded bark and grass clippings.

TEMPORARY SEEDING: Rapid-growing annual grasses or small grains can stabilize disturbed soils until the project is completed or permanent plantings.

SOD COVER. Sod will permanently stabilize an area. Sod is especially useful for immediate cover on steep, critical areas and in areas unsuitable for seed.

COMPOST BARRIER BERMS: Berms are mounds of material used to trap a pollutant or sediment. In this case, the berm is made of compost. On steep slopes, compost berms at the top or bottom of slopes will slow the velocity of water and filter out some of the sediment.

SILT FENCE BALE BARRIER: A silt fence is a temporary sediment barrier made of filter fabric. As the name implies, the main use is to trap silt and sand. The fabric is placed around the lower part of the bare soil to trap sand and silt, but allow water through. The fabric is stretched and staked around the edge of the disturbed area. Burying the base of the silt fence keeps sediment from washing under it.